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Threat to Egypt

Q: What are some of the security threats to Egypt?

A: Egypt, for example, faces a threat from Libya, which is likely to increase as more Soviet equipment is introduced into Libya. Libya's Air Force already can reach all military and population centers in Egypt and its Army has almost reached parity with the Egyptians in armor. Also, Egypt faces a potential threat from the South. At the present time, we are particularly aware of this because of the massive Soviet influx of arms and personnel into Ethiopia following their previous military buildup of Somalia.

Basing for F-5s: Threat to Israel

Q: Will the F-5s be based in the Sinai? How can we be sure that they will not be based against Israel?

A: President Sadat publicly has stated that he renounces further war with Israel. During recent visit to Washington, he personally reassured Members of the Congress that although he was requesting U.S.-supplied military equipment, such items would not be used against Israel. As for future military arrangements, including possible demilitarization in the Sinai, this subject is being discussed between Egypt and Israel in the context of their negotiations.

Shift in US Policy Re "Nonlethal" Weapons for Egypt

Q: During the course of open hearings held September 21, 1977, the following exchange took place and I quote: Senator Sarbanes -- "There is no consideration of departing from the nonlethal principles which have guided last year's consideration, and which guides the package that is before us, is there?" Mr. Veliotes -- "Yes, sir, I think that is correct.

The proposal to sell F-5s is an obvious departure from the earlier enunciated policy. Please explain the reasons underlying this shift in USG policy.

A: A number of important events have transpired subsequent to the testimony cited in your question. Foremost among these was President Sadat's decision to enter into direct negotiations with the Government of Israel aimed at a negoitated settlement to long-standing area disputes. In the context of his speech before the Israeli Knesset and his subsequent conversations with Prime Minister Begin, as well as in his public utterances, President Sadat repeatedly has renounced the resort to war in seeking a solution to Egypt's differences with Israel. It is in the context of this most important change in Egypt's policy that we are able to revise our own position.

Despite the fact that the F-5s are combat aircraft, they are designed primarily for use in air defense.

When Were F-5s First Considered?

Q: During the course of Mr. Atherton's open testimony before the Hamilton Subcommittee on September 15, 1977, he stated, and I quote: "We have no lethal equipment under consideration." At the time the proposal to sell F-5s was announced, a "senior State Department official" is quoted as having said: "We have been considering these requests from each of the three countries for a considerable period of time..."

Would you please explain this apparent inconsistency?

A: In the context of Mr. Atherton's September 15 conversation to which you have alluded, the following exchange also took place:

"Mr. Hamilton: President Sadat has often indicated in conversations with American Congressmen that he has an interest in TOW missiles and F-5 aircraft. Are sales of any of those items under review at the present time? Do we have any requests from Egypt at the present time about such equipment?

"Mr. Atherton: No, we have no requests from Egypt at the present time, and there is no consideration being given to them. However, we are well aware of his interest. He has indicated it on many occasions."

Accordingly, while the Egyptian interests in F-5s was well known to us for some time, we did not have a formal request under consideration at the time of Mr. Atherton's testimony.

E-5

Number of F-5s Proposed for Sale

Q: The Egyptian Government reportedly requested as many as 120 F-5s. The Administration proposes to sell 50. How did you arrive at this figure?

A: Various considerations went into the Administration's decision on the number of F-5s to be sold to Egypt. Although President Sadat's government earlier had requested 120 of these planes, we had to consider overall objectives such as our arms transfer ceiling and the objective of maintaining the balance of military forces in the area, as well as our assessment of the threat and need for these aircraft. After careful review of all these factors, we concluded that 50 F-5s would be the appropriate number to propose for sale.

Egyptian Military Equipment

Q: How many weapons--and of what type--has Egypt received from sources other than the United States since the 1973 war? Did they receive weapons from the USSR as late as 1977? If so, were these restricted to follow-on deliveries of previously signed contracts, or were some under newly signed agreements?

A: Based on our evaluation of all information available to us, we have concluded that virtually no new Soviet equipment has arrived in Egypt since mid-1975, although there have been a few deliveries of items being returned from the USSR after refurbishing. To the best of our knowledge, all deliveries of Soviet military equipment after October 1973 were based on previously signed contracts; we are not aware of any contracts having been signed between the Soviet and Egyptian governments after the 1973 war.

Americans in Egypt as a Result of Sale

Q: How many Americans will be located in Egypt to support the proposed sale?

A: We anticipate a need for about ten U.S. Government personnel and possibly 31 American contractors. While the exact numbers have not been determined, pending a field survey, the parameters for support are defined clearly: (a) the number of U.S. military personnel and American civilians will be kept to a minimum; (b) the objective will be to perform tasks in Egypt as rapidly as possible, turning over functions to Egyptians as soon as mastery of skills is achieved; and (c) initial training should take place in the U.S. rather than in Egypt.

Refurbishing and Maintaining Egypt's MIG-21 Aircraft

Q: What is the status of the earlier plan whereby American firms would participate in a program to refurbish and maintain Egypt's MIG-21 fleet?

A: The American companies, in conjunction with third country counterpart firms, prepared proposals for engine and airframe work on the MIG-21s. These proposals were presented to the GOE in mid-January. It is our understanding that the GOE has decided not to accept those proposals.

If pressed re whether this means U.S. firms definitely out of the running:

The GOE has not publicly announced its decision on awarding contracts for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the MIG-21s. Until such an announcement is made, we will not know the final answer to this question. Since the proposals put forward by the consortia to which the American firms were partners have not been rejected formally, presumably they technically are still under study.

Sale of Mirage F-1 Aircraft to Egypt

Q: There have been reports that Egypt is purchasing some 40 odd F-1 aircraft from France. It is also reported that this plane might be co-produced in Egypt. Would you please comment?

A: It is our understanding that conversations have taken place between the French and Egyptians concerning Egyptian interest in the F-1. Both the Egyptians and the French have denied any intention of proceeding with an F-1 sale.

Jaguar Sale

Q: Britain, reportedly, has previously refused to sell Jaguars to Egypt on the grounds that this would upset the military balance in the Middle East. Is this true?

A: We are not informed about the content of any discussions which may have taken place earlier on this matter between HMG and the Egyptian Government. In early November 1975, the British press speculated that the British Government was on the verge of approving sale of Jaguars to Egypt. However, there was no subsequent confirmation of such a decision, and, to the best of our knowledge, the Egyptians have not expressed an interest in over two years in the purchase of Jaguar aircraft.

Armaments for F-5s

Q: What will be the armament for the F-5s you propose to sell to Egypt? Will they be equipped with "Maverick" or other comparable missilery?

A: The F-5s will be equipped with two 20mm cannons and two "Sidewinder" air-to-air, fair weather missiles. The aircraft will not be configured to accept either "Maverick" or Laser Guided Bomb (LGBS) nor will they have aerial refueling capability. The Egyptian Government agrees with our proposed configuration. The planes' residual air-to-ground capabilities will depend on use of "iron bombs". Should the Egyptians decide to use the F-5s in this mode, they seriously will degrade the aircraft's operating capabilities in terms of range, speed and maneuverability.

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F-5 as a "Tenth Rate Aircraft"

Q: During his recent discussions with Congressmen, President Sadat at one point referred to the F-5 as a "tenth rate aircraft". If he is so disparaging of this plane, why are we selling it to him?

A: Quite frankly, President Sadat would have preferred to have received a more advanced plane such as the F-15 or F-16. We did not consider sale of those aircraft to Egypt. Although undoubtedly somewhat disappointed not to have received the more sophisticated F-15 or F-16, President Sadat is pleased with our decision to sell the F-5.

Resupply in Time of War

Q: In the event of a war, won't Egypt request that the U.S. replace any aircraft lost? Couldn't we find ourselves arming both sides in a future conflict?

A: There is no commitment on the part of the U.S. concerning future resupply. Any future requests for replacement aircraft would have to be weighed carefully in the context of the particular circumstances and U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Egyptian Finances

Q: Who is paying for the Egyptian F-5s?

A: The Egyptian economy will not have to bear the burden of financing this sale. We understand that one or more of Egypt's wealthier neighbors will assist it with the necessary financing.

Is This a Sop to "Buy Off" Sadat's Military Opponents?

Q: It has been suggested that the proposed sales are meant to pacify military opponents of President Sadat and thereby forestall a coup. If this true?

A: It is our considered judgment that the military sector, as other elements within Egyptian society, support President Sadat in his peace initiatives. The proposed sales are neither a "reward" for President Sadat's initiatives nor an attempt to buy any sort of favor within either a part of the Egyptian establishment or the government as a whole. Rather, the sales are meant to meet legitimate Egyptian security and defense needs. As you know, these requirements include concerns in Africa. In so doing, the sales should increase Egyptian confidence in pursuing the bold policy of seeking a negotiated settlement of long-standing disputes in the area.

Training for F-5s

Q: Where will training take place for Egyptian pilots and technicians involved in introducing this equipment into the Egyptian arsenal?

A: Initially, training will take place in the United States. As the F-5s are phased into active operation in the Egyptian Air Force, the training progressively will be transferred to take place in Egypt.

E-17

Status of Present Arms Program with Egypt

Q: What is the present status of previously approved arms sales to Egypt?

A: Letters of Offer and Acceptance have been signed for the purchase of 14 C-130s as approved by the Congress in October of 1977.

--At the same time, the Congress approved the sale of 12 RPVs (reconnaissance pilotless vehicles), or drones to Egypt. The Egyptian Government has not reached a final decision on purchase of reconnaissance drones; although the Letter of Offer has expired.

--Congressional contracts have been signed for the purchases of reconnaissance photography pods. The USNS HARKNESS, a U.S. Naval ship, is now in Egyptian waters conducting a hydrographic survey of the approaches to the Suez Canal.

--If asked: In response to a request by President Sadat, we are seeking to accelerate the schedule of delivery of the C-130s. Insofar as possible, we wish to help the Egyptians meet their immediate needs for transport aircraft, and consequently are considering in what others ways we might meet their pressing needs for these planes.

ACDA Views

Q: What are the views of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency relative to the proposed sale of F-5s to Egypt?

A: ACDA has reviewed this proposed sale and interposes no objections.

Q: Is it true that the Egyptians have modified one or more of their C-130s for use as a gun ship?

A: No. Our people in Egypt would be aware if such a modification had taken place. We have no evidence whatsoever that a C-130 has been converted to a gun ship.